

Wildlife Diversity News

A Publication of the Iowa DNR Wildlife Diversity Program

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Winter 2013

Perfect Day in the Field

It was a gorgeous day to be outside, especially for August. Yesterday it was 100 degrees in the shade, and the day had been spent near the southern border of Iowa searching for evidence of nesting birds for the Breeding Bird Atlas. Today was being spent in the field, too, only the location had changed to northern Iowa in Floyd County. It rained last night, and the temperature was 30 degrees cooler this morning. It seemed a good day to visit the woods, so the search was on for birds in oak woodlands along a scenic stretch of the Cedar River – at Idlewild Wildlife Area. The birds seemed to be celebrating the rain and coolness. Family groups were busily feeding, and many birds were singing. While walking a trail along the Cedar River, the characteristic tea-kettle, tea-kettle, tea-kettle song of a Carolina Wren was heard emanating from a nearby shrubby area on the bank of the river. As the singing bird was approached, food-begging calls of a young wren were heard, and a family group of Carolina Wrens was quickly spotted. One adult wren held a squished green caterpillar in its bill, and a persistent youngster badgered the adult until it finally gave in and delivered the food package to the youngster's gaping mouth.

While enjoying the antics of the wren family, another family group was observed foraging for insects about 25 feet beyond the wrens. A pair of Black-and-white Warblers and their 3 stub-tailed youngsters were busily picking bugs from the stems and leaves of some dogwood shrubs. Above the feeding birds stood a massive White Oak tree with large horizontal branches. The family group of warblers soon were seen gleaning insects on the trunk and lower branches of this wonderful old oak tree. A family of rather loquacious Black-capped Chickadees also inhabited the oak tree, and they made it a point to scold the human intruder who was observing them. Upon closer scrutiny of the contents of the oak

tree branches, it was discovered that the tree was alive with bird activity.

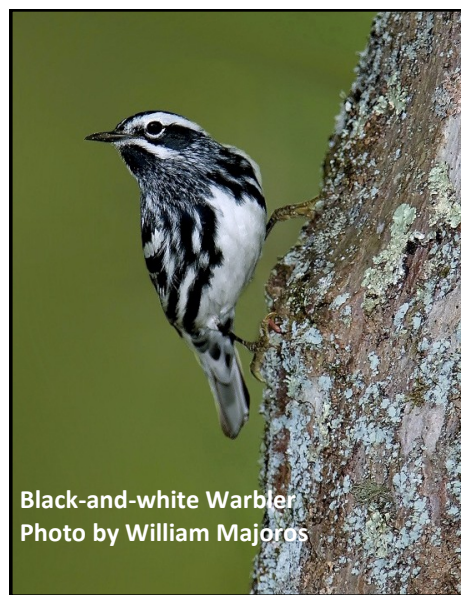
Families of Downy Woodpeckers, White-breasted Nuthatches and Eastern Wood Pewees were all busily bugging. A ticked-off Red-eyed Vireo, a male Baltimore Oriole and a small gang of Blue Jays joined the chickadees voicing their displeasure with the human's presence. Other birds in the oak tree voicing irritation included a pair of Red-bellied Woodpeckers, a male Hairy Woodpecker, and a male Northern Cardinal. A male American Redstart also joined the group, but he seemed more intent on capturing a meal than wasting energy scolding.

The early morning light, filtering through the branches of the oak tree, was nearly perfect for observing details of the various bird behaviors. The whole scene seemed a bit surreal, and the glistening leaves, still damp from the earlier rain-shower, formed an interesting back-drop for the flitting birds - with flecks of red, blue, orange and yellow dotting the various shades of green offered by the tree's canopy. The colorful animated show, along with a cacophony of bird songs and sounds, was rather like attending a bird circus. This was indeed a memorable outing and the kind of day that an admirer of birds lives for.

After five glorious years in the field gathering data for Iowa's Breeding Bird Atlas, this was the last day spent in the field by this particular observer. Not being one to believe in coincidence, this observer feels very fortunate to be blessed by such an extraordinary and perfect day - spent happily amongst the feathered-beings with whom we share our earth-home.

-Bruce Ehresman

Wildlife Diversity Avian Ecologist



Black-and-white Warbler
Photo by William Majors

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Edited by Erica Eaves

Diversity Dispatch

Breaking News in the Wide World of Wildlife

Wasps Have Good Hygiene

As humans, we wash up or use hand sanitizer when we feel we might be in a dirty environment. As it turns out, Emerald Cockroach Wasps care about keeping clean, too. Mother wasps will lay one egg on a cockroach- the parasitized insect will become the larva's first meal. As we all know, cockroaches can end up in some pretty grimy places. So to make sure their food source is good to eat, the larva will secrete and coat the cockroach in an antimicrobial liquid. After essentially "sanitizing" their food, the larva can be sure there's no danger of fungi, viruses, or bacteria.



Crayfish Suffering From Chytrid Fungus Too?

There has been quite a buzz in the conservation world over the last few decades about a deadly disease-causing fungus. Chytrid fungus has been responsible for the extinction of more than 300 frog and other amphibian species. There are still many mysteries surrounding this fungus, but a recent study has brought scientists one step closer to understanding why this pathogen is spelling out disaster for amphibians worldwide. Results suggest that crayfish can also become infected and will act as a reservoir for the disease—allowing the fungus to persist in water bodies until its preferred amphibian host is present. Crayfish populations suffer some fatalities, but survivors will carry the fungus. This could explain the rapid spread of the pathogen to other water bodies as crayfish are commonly transported as bait, food, or pets.

Alligators and Crocodiles Have a Sensitive Side



These reptiles are dotted with tiny raised black spots. In alligators, these bumps are mostly concentrated on their head, jaws, and mouth—about 4,000 in total. Crocodiles have even more; in addition to being located on their head, bumps are found covering the rest of their bodies. These bumps have long been known as "integumentary sensory organs", and although there was much speculation about their function, their real purpose was only recently revealed. A study done by a student at Vanderbilt University demonstrated that these bumps are insanely sensitive—capable of detecting the tiniest of pressure changes. Reasons for being this touchy-feely? Scientists suspect it aids in locating prey, helps young emerge from their shells, and allows the mother to carefully shelter her young inside her powerful jaws.

2012 Volunteer Wildlife Monitoring Program Round-up

The dry weather last year made for some interesting survey conditions, and I am sure we'll continue to see the effects of the drought in the upcoming season. The percentage of traditional frog and toad surveys done within 24 hours of rain, for example, was down to 20% from 43% in the previous two years. The average number of days since rain for the North American Amphibian (NAAMP) survey doubled from 2.3 in 2011 to 4.5 in 2012. In addition to the drought we had a mild winter last year

and an early, warm spring. For both the traditional surveys and for the NAAMP routes, the average temperatures recorded during the first and second survey windows in 2012 were 3-4 degrees higher than those recorded in 2011, though temperatures for the third run were roughly the same between years. Overall species' trends between 2011 and 2012 showed very little impact from the unusual weather patterns, though the early spring and lack of rainfall may have changed the timing of

species' breeding behavior. In most cases activity started earlier in 2012 than in 2011. By the third survey window the number of individuals actively breeding was noticeably lower in 2012 than in 2011. The upcoming season may show more of the drought's impacts on Iowa's frog and toad populations, especially if drought conditions continue.

Of the species detected on the traditional frog and toad survey routes, 10 have been detected often enough to identify trends. Five species showed a

Continued on Page 3

VWMP (continued)

declining trend from 2011 to 2012 (Bullfrog, Green Frog, Plains Leopard Frog, Chorus Frog, Cope's Gray Treefrog) and five either held steady or increased (American Toad, Northern Leopard Frog, Eastern Gray Treefrog, Spring Peeper, Cricket Frog). Over the last ten years, however, only Spring Peeper show an overall downward trend, which is a bit unexpected as the species is expanding its range westward in the state. The number of survey sites classified as Timbered Riverine (Spring Peeper's preferred habitat) has stayed fairly constant over the ten year period, so we can't blame the decrease in detections on a lack of habitat or on our simply not surveying the appropriate habitat. There is a possibility

that the downward trend is not actually a change in population numbers but in breeding dates. There has been some thought

that earlier, warmer springs might be influencing many species, including Spring Peepers, to adjust the timing of their reproduction. If this is the case, we may be missing some of the frogs that are calling before our first survey window opening on April 1st. Regardless, Spring Peepers are a species to watch closely.

The NAAMP survey routes detected 15 of Iowa's 18 NAAMP species. As a side note, NAAMP combines Fowler's and Woodhouse's Toads into one category, because the two species can be very difficult to distinguish. Also, NAAMP includes a category for unknown tree frog, as Cope's and Eastern Gray

Treefrogs are difficult to tell apart. Pickerel Frog, Plains Spadefoot, Great Plains Toad, and Woodhouse's/Fowler's Toad were all detected on NAAMP surveys but were not heard on the traditional surveys, likely because the NAAMP routes cover a larger geographic area.

Two of the three most commonly heard species across all sites and runs was the same for both traditional and NAAMP surveys: Boreal Chorus Frog and American Toad. However, the Cricket Frog was recorded at the second highest percentage of sites on the NAAMP survey. The Cricket Frog

also showed the highest or second highest average abundance index on both surveys, which means it is doing well in Iowa despite evidence of a decline in the northern parts of

its range. No species occurred on all 36 routes surveyed, though American Toad was heard on 34 routes and Cricket Frogs were heard on 32 routes. Like the traditional surveys, the NAAMP data also showed a split in trends, with some species demonstrating a declining trend while others were stable or had an



Spring Peeper

upward trend. However the species that exhibited the trends were, in some cases, different between the two survey methods. Species that were detected at fewer sites in 2012 versus 2011 were: Chorus Frog, **Eastern Gray Treefrog**, Cope's Gray Treefrog, Green Frog, and Great Plains Toad (bolded species are those with an opposite trend from the traditional survey). Species that were seen more frequently or were stable were: American Toad, Cricket Frog, Northern Leopard Frog, **Bullfrog**, Spring Peeper, **Plains Leopard Frog**. Moving forward, our focus will continue to be the adoption of NAAMP routes until we have at least 90% of the 85 possible routes assigned.

-Katy Patterson
VWMP Co-Coordinator



American Toad
Photo from Missouri Department of Conservation



Want to get involved with next year's Volunteer Wildlife Monitoring Frog & Toad Call Surveys? Visit: <http://www.iowadnr.gov/volunteerwildlifemonitoring.aspx>

Tax Season Reminder!

This Eastern screech-owl (*Otus asio*) is our new Fish and Wildlife tax check-off ambassador, chosen to represent his species and all other animals in Iowa supported by the Wildlife Diversity Program.

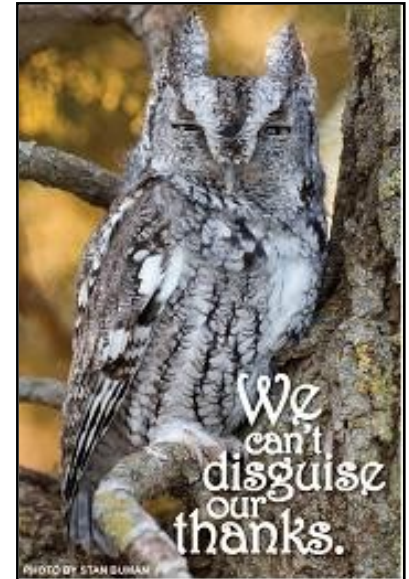
The check-off, nicknamed the Chickadee Check-off, was created in 1981 to supplement funding for the Iowa DNR's Wildlife Diversity Program. Donations from this check-off have fallen 68% over the past two decades to hover around \$112,000 per year.

You can support this critical

funding source by checking line 58a on your tax form. You can donate as much or as little as you choose and all contributions are deductible on the next year's tax return. The check-off dollars fund projects such as peregrine falcon reintroduction, prairie chicken conservation, and the Volunteer Wildlife Monitoring Program (VWMP).

Please spread the word about this important funding opportunity!

-Katy Patterson
VWMP Coordinator



2012 Multiple Species Inventory and Monitoring Program (MSIM) Update



The 2012 MSIM field season has long since passed as I look out the window at the frozen Iowa morning. We had a fine year in 2012 with the addition of Tyler Harms on our MSIM team and the partnership with Iowa State University to administer the project. As most of us know, 2012 started out with a wonderful early warm spell in March which never really slowed down, instead building to one of the driest years on record for Iowa and the Midwest. Needless to say, flooding was not a problem this year, although we had some hot days to endure.

For the second year in a row, mosquitoes were not a problem although ticks were still persistent.

a small crew working exclusively in the Port Louisa NWR area. This made for lots of driving and some marked ecological contrasts. Traveling from Lee County to Lyon County in one day was good for an interesting change in perspective! The crews worked hard and gathered a large volume of data with a good number of Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) records this year.

The Northwest Crew consisted of Joe Lambert, Kyle Kossel, Katelyn Horn, Megan Waechter, Betsy Salmon, and Jeremy Rappaport. They were responsible for properties in Lyon, Osceola, Dickinson, Sioux, O'Brien, and Sac counties that consisted of prairie pothole habitat in the Great Lakes area

to bur oak woodlands along the Big Sioux River. They found Blanding's turtles and ermines in the potholes and Edward's hairstreak butterflies in the bur oak woodlands along the Big Sioux.

The Northcentral Crew was made up of Marcus Nelson, Jacob Newton, Tessa Enroth, Jordan Lindaman, Samantha Pike, and Andy Huck. They worked on properties in Emmet, Palo Alto, Kossuth, and Wright counties which consisted mostly of prairie pothole habitat. Smooth green snakes, citrine forktails, and ermines were just a few interesting species the NC crew documented in 2012.

The Northeast Crew was filled by Danny Rose, Benjamin Scheberl, Sam Wetter, Amy Buckendahl, and Kaytlan Bockenstedt. They worked primarily in the woodlands of the Paleozoic Plateau Region in Allamakee and Clayton counties, but had responsibilities in Tama, Jasper, and Clinton counties as well. They were fortunate to document new records for the timber rattlesnake, the six-lined racerunner, and new cerulean warbler breeding territories.

Continued on Page 5

MSIM (continued)

The Southeast Crew consisted of Liz Hemman, Amy Ouellette, Michelle Sabatini, Elizabeth Owens, Wyatt Puent, and Paul Davis. Their properties were mostly wooded habitat located in Jefferson, Henry, Des Moines, Lee, Van Buren, Monroe, and Muscatine counties. With the help of Ryan Rasmussen, the Southeast Crew documented two new dragonfly species for the state; the springtime darter and the stream cruiser. They also found two new populations of the rare blue corporal dragonfly and a new location for the smooth earth snake.

Our small crew based at Port Louisa NWR was staffed by Rachel Townsend, Ashley Sulak, Phil Vogrinc, and Tyler Michels. They worked mostly at the refuge and Lake Odessa WMA. They documented several occurrences of the copperbelly

water snake on both areas.

The Western Crew was made up of Kevin Haupt, Cyndi Trail, Christine Fries, and Shelby Sterner. They worked on land in Monona, Harrison, Decatur and Ringgold counties that consisted of loess hill prairie, woodland, marsh, and riparian forest. Some interesting species encountered were bobcats, black meadowhawks, red milk snakes and vesper bluets. In addition, Bryan

Bakevich completed fish sampling throughout the state and Ryan Rasmussen assisted the Southeast Crew primarily, but helped other crews

when needed. They both provided vital assistance when it was needed most.

The MSIM project continues to document Iowa's fish and wildlife species and habitat on public lands so we have a better understanding of our remaining



Six-lined racerunner
Photo by Ryan Rasmussen



Citrine forktail
Photo by Ryan Rasmussen

natural heritage. We greatly appreciate the cooperation and access from Iowa landowners such as the County Conservation Boards, State Parks, U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, private landowners, and the IDNR Forestry and Wildlife Bureaus. Each year we look forward to getting out in the field to find out more about Iowa's fish and wildlife species and their ecological requirements.

-Paul Frese
Wildlife Diversity Technician II

For more information about the MSIM project, e-mail paul.frese@dnr.iowa.gov

Volunteer Shout-out

As we recently recognized Martin Luther King Jr. Day, it seems an appropriate time to once again give a great big thank you to all of our volunteers. This day of service might be more formally dedicated to volunteering for immediately recognizable human-oriented opportunities (shelters, schools, churches) but one could argue that natural resources and wildlife are a basic need to the well-being of people as well. Wild spaces, clean air and water, being able to see and enjoying various forms of wildlife are an inherent component of the human psyche. So THANK YOU, not just those of you that volunteer directly with the Wildlife Diversity Program, but also those of you that volunteer with any other natural resource oriented organization. There are so many needs in the wildlife and natural resource communities, from habitat management (planting prairies, forests, eradicating invasive species) to education and outreach (leading birding groups, giving a talk at the State Fair) or even donating money to a non-government organization like the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation.

Traditionally we might not think of folks who 'putter' in their backyards to provide urban wildlife habitat as 'volunteers' but the moniker fits there too. If we didn't get some enjoyment from either the effort or the outcome, we wouldn't bother, would we? Planting a butterfly garden or providing a water feature for wildlife in your backyard might only immediately benefit you and your family, but those animals are benefiting too, and their existence can provide enjoyment to your neighbors or even people in South America as well.

Government agencies cannot on their own provide the needed habitat components for most of the species in Iowa. This is also true at a National scale. Lands owned by either by NGOs or private individuals are often managed for various species. Even little backyard oases can help for the overall conservation of wildlife. Every little bit helps, so to quote Pat, thank you for all you do for conservation.

-Karen Kinhead
WDP Coordinator



Meet the New Members of the Wildlife Diversity Program!



Katy Patterson, Volunteer Wildlife Monitoring Program Coordinator

Katy comes to the Iowa DNR via a roundabout path that has taken her to many different states and to a variety of career experiences. Katy is an avid bird watcher who has a special interest in raptors, and she was fortunate to study the wintering behavior of bald eagles for her Master's Degree project through Eastern Kentucky University.

Some of Katy's other areas of interest include songbird banding, butterfly watching, native plant gardening, wildlife and nature photography, rock collecting, and natural resources education. Her favorite students are her own children, and she spends as much time outdoors with her family as possible.

Katy is thrilled to be part of the IDNR's Wildlife Diversity Program as co-coordinator of the Volunteer Wildlife Monitoring Program.

Erica Eaves, Wildlife Diversity Program Aide

Erica began working as the WDP Aide in October 2012. While her main function is to create education materials about Iowa's non-game wildlife, she also gets to help plan and execute public events such as the upcoming Bald Eagle Appreciation Days. With a passion for anything outdoors, she's also looking forward to assisting the MSIM crew with their extensive surveys.

Erica grew up in Houston, Texas where her love for nature began at an early age. While attending Iowa State University she managed a wildlife rehabilitation clinic and in 2011 earned a B.S. in Animal Ecology. Following graduation, Erica fostered her interest in educating the public about natural resources by holding several seasonal naturalist positions in central Iowa.

An avid hiker, explorer, camper, and rockhouser, Erica just plain loves being outside. She enjoys participating in local Christmas Bird Counts and is making progress on her goal of visiting every Iowa State Park. Erica is thankful for her opportunity to work with the WDP team and can't wait to absorb some of their knowledge.



Joe Lambert, Wildlife Aide

Joe began working as a Wildlife Aide in October 2012. He has helped prepare for the upcoming field season and entered data. Additionally, Joe is working for the Upland Game program. Quail counts, roadside surveys, and prairie chicken fieldwork will be his primary duties for this program.

Joe grew up in north-central Iowa in the town of Mason City. He recently received his Bachelor's Degree in Animal Ecology from Iowa State University in 2012. During the summer of 2010, Joe was employed with the Minnesota DNR as a Biological Technician, where he banded and tracked ring-necked ducks. After this position, he worked on a project examining the affect wind turbines have on bird nesting. This past summer, Joe worked as a Natural Resource Aide for MSIM where he helped with a variety of surveys.

Joe spends most of his time hunting, birding, fishing, and hiking. He is looking forward to working with everyone from the Wildlife Diversity team.



Iowa Whitetails: Winter Life (Part 3)



Winter is here and Iowa's whitetails are well-prepared with their thick, two-layer coats. A whitetail's winter coat can be over an inch thick and is made of longer guard hairs that are filled with air pockets in addition to an underlayer of fine fur. The coat insulates

so well that snow can build up on their backs without melting.

As the breeding season ends, bucks form bachelor groups and related does and fawns will often form extended family groups. Winter is when deer are most concentrated in Iowa, utilizing the woods, brushy areas, and any other cover remaining after the crops are harvested. These areas provide security, thermal protection, and browse during the harsh months of winter.

The metabolism and food intake of whitetails decreases significantly in

winter and the animals begin to utilize their fat reserves to meet a portion of their daily nutrient needs. Even in the food-rich Midwest, white-tailed deer begin to lose body condition as they "coast" towards spring. For bucks, the decline in body condition causes a change in hormone levels and influences the antler shedding cycle. During extremely harsh conditions, deer will often forego feeding and remain bedded in sheltered areas to conserve energy.

People feeding deer during the winter months can potentially cause harm. Food handouts that differ from a whitetail's current diet can cause digestive problems which will often result in death. People are encouraged to not feed deer and instead allow them to forage naturally.

-Tom Litchfield
State Deer Biologist

Falcon River Trip: May 3rd & 4th, 2013

Peregrine Falcons have been highly revered for centuries. These charismatic birds captured the attention of indigenous cultures as evidenced in an array of falcon effigies along the Mississippi flyway. But these falcons almost met a tragic end in the 1960s. Much like their Bald Eagle counterparts, peregrine falcons were a victim of DDT biocide contamination. Nesting peregrines disappeared from skies over Iowa to the East Coast.

It took a lot of work, but these falcons have become one of the few success stories. Thanks go out to all the volunteer conservationists and non-governmental organizations like the Raptor Resource Project, Midwest Peregrine Falcon Recovery Team, and Iowa Peregrine Falcon Recovery Team;

environmental groups like National Audubon, Iowa Wildlife Federation; private companies like Mid-American and Alliant Energy; and natural resource agencies including U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, and Minnesota, Wisconsin and Iowa Departments of Natural Resources. Without this coordinated effort, Peregrine Falcons may have been lost from the river cliffs forever.

In an endeavor to foster and culture an appreciation for their return, come see their flights and hear their calls. During spring, spectacular aerial displays and courtship calls of wild falcons can be viewed as they reclaim the cliff-ledge nest sites of their ancestors!



Join us May 3rd at the Harper's Ferry Community Center at 6PM for a Friday Night Fish Fry and falcon program. Boat trips to falcon cliffs will be available on Saturday, May 4th by Captain Robert Vavra with Maiden Voyage River Tours. There is a "free-will" donation for the fish fry and boat trips. We hope to see you there!

Species Spotlight: Milk Snake

Of Iowa's 27 snake species, the Milk Snake, *Lampropeltis triangulum*, is arguably the most beautiful...for a snake! Milk snakes have a unique pattern of red, white, and black rings or blotches on their bodies, reminding one of a candy cane or barber pole. Milk snakes are a diverse and wide ranging group with representatives living from South America all the way to Canada. Color patterns on milk snakes are as variable as the geography in which they are found, from very brightly colored whites and reds in the southern range to drab reds and browns in the northern range. In fact milk snakes are thought to be mimics of the venomous coral snake which are found from the southeastern part of the U.S. into South America. Milk snakes in Iowa are highly variable in coloration, but can be quite striking, especially as youngsters. Milk snakes are thought to have earned their name by their presence in barns and the mistaken notion that they drank milk from a cow's udder. Milk snakes were undoubtedly following rodents into the barns and providing a great service to farmers instead of stealing milk!



In Iowa, milk snakes could be found virtually anywhere. Range wide they are truly a generalist in habitat preference, but would be best categorized as a woodland or edge species in our state. Milk snakes in Iowa are usually found in open woodland areas with rocky outcrops and flat rocks for cover, making them more common in

the eastern portion of the state, but they can turn up in any place with adequate habitat. Milk snakes have a habit of using old foundations of barns and houses for winter retreats, upsetting many an unsuspecting homeowner! They are quite harmless and actually become tame very easily. This trait combined with their beauty has made them a prized possession for reptile collectors. In some states it is suspected that milk snake populations have been reduced by snake collecting, which is illegal in Iowa.



Throughout their range milk snakes are known to eat small mammals, lizards, snakes, birds, eggs, and frogs....but no milk! They are an active predator and constrictor, so they immobilize their prey in body coils before swallowing. In Iowa, milk snakes feed primarily on voles, mice, and shrews, but may feed on other snakes and skinks in some locations. Anyone that doesn't want mice in their house should appreciate a milk snake in the yard!

Milk snakes spend a lot of time underground in burrows or sheltered by rocks, logs, boards or other cover. Deep rock crevices, mammal burrows, and old foundations are used for winter retreats. After emergence in the spring, they use cover like rocks or boards to thermoregulate while remaining protected from predators. Hawks, owls, crows, foxes, coyotes, raccoons, skunks, and opossums are potential predators. Young snakes may be taken by moles, house cats, and even blue jays or robins!



Springtime is the mating season for milk snakes, often occurring soon after emerging from hibernation. Females lay a clutch of 5-10 sticky eggs in a mammal burrow, rotten log, or other warm, protected place where the eggs remain for around 60 days until hatching. Young snakes look like brightly colored miniature versions of the adults. They probably spend their time under cover looking for baby rodents and shrews to eat.

In Iowa, milk snakes are not considered rare, but they are fairly uncommon. Like most snakes, many are killed needlessly by misinformed people as well as succumbing to heavy traffic on our roadways. Even if you can't stand snakes, I hope you'll find that milk snakes are a beautiful and fascinating part of Iowa's natural history and should be appreciated instead of persecuted.

-Paul Frese

Wildlife Diversity Technician II



Wildlife Diversity Program Team ...putting a face to a name!



From left to right: **Katy Patterson** (VWMP Co-Coordinator), **Paul Frese** (Wildlife Diversity Technician II), **Erica Eaves** (WDP Aide), **Shane Patterson** (BBA Volunteer Coordinator), **Stephanie Shepherd** (Surveys and Data Coordinator), **Tyler Harms** (MSIM Biologist), **Karen Kinkead** (Wildlife Diversity Program Coordinator), **Joe Lambert** (Wildlife Aide), **Pat Schlarbaum** (Wildlife Diversity Technician II), **Bruce Ehresman** (Wildlife Diversity Avian Ecologist), and **Katy Reeder** (Wildlife Action Plan Manager).

Good year for the Eagles



Iowa's Bald Eagles had another relatively successful year. Forty-seven percent (104) of the territories reported as active in 2012 included data on the outcome of the nesting season. Of those nests, 89 (86%) were successful in producing young, while 15 (14%) of the 104 nests ended up failing. The 98 territories for which we have reports of fledglings produced 151 young, which averages to 1.54 young produced per nest. If we extrapolate, assuming 86% of all nests reported as active were successful, approximately 294 young fledged from Iowa nests in 2012!

Overall, we received data on 307 bald eagle territories, 48 of which were reported for the first time in 2012. Roughly 72% (222) of the territories were reported active in 2012, and 21% (65) were reported inactive. The remaining 20

territories were reported with unknown activity.

All nesting reports are valuable to our monitoring of Iowa's eagle population, but the sentinel territories that our volunteer nest monitors visit provide us with a structured data set that is more easily analyzed for trend information than is the entire data set. For 2012 we had 136 sentinel territories, 95 of which had monitors. We received data on 77 (81%) of these 95 territories. Of the 77 territories for which we received reports, 61 were active (79%), 13 were inactive (17%), and 3 could not be found or had unknown activity. The outcome of the 61 active nests broke down as follows: 45 successful, 3 failed and 13 unknown.

Seventy-one young were produced by the active nests: 3 nests fledged no young, 8 nests fledged 1 young, 27 nests fledged 2 young and 3 nests fledged 3 young. The estimated number of young produced per nest was 1.48. For 27 of the territories, monitors were able to collect data on the number of chicks and the number of fledglings.

From these data it appears that eaglet survival to fledging was high; 96% of the chicks observed in these nests reached fledging. Monitoring of sentinel nests will continue in the 2013 nesting season.

We will be adjusting the number of sentinel nests to reflect the higher number of active territories as well as to replace territories that have become inactive (no nesting activity for three years). We hope to recruit and train volunteers to monitor all sentinel territories, with the ultimate goal being to receive data on at least 25% of all active territories in the state.

-Katy Patterson
VWMP Coordinator



Last Look



The WDP team and Prairie Lakes Wildlife Management Unit had a great day this fall working to build exclosures for a prairie vegetation study being conducted by Dr. Tom Rosburg and his students at Drake University. We had a blast helping out and look forward to additional opportunities to assist and learn new skills!

Events Calendar

2013 Bald Eagle Appreciation Days

Feb. 23, 9am-4pm, Prairie du Chien, WI
Outdoor viewing at Visitor's Center
For more information, call 563-873-3491

Feb. 24, 11am-4pm
Saylorville Lake Visitor Center, Polk City, IA

Mar. 23, 8:30am-3pm, Sioux Rapids, IA
American Legion Building, 200 Main Street
*To preregister, write to: Wonders of Nature, 107 Weaver, Linn Grove, IA 51033

2013 Bird Nest Monitoring Workshops

Feb. 23, 10am-4:30pm
O'Brien County Conservation's Prairie Learning Center
4931 Yellow Ave., Peterson, IA

March 16, 10am-4:30pm
Muscatine County Conservations' Environmental Learning Center, Discovery Park on Cedar St., Muscatine IA

March 23, 10am-4:30pm
Marshall County Conservation's Grimes Farm and Conservation Center, 2349 233rd St., Marshalltown, IA

2013 Frog and Toad Workshops

April 2, 5:30pm-9pm
Osceola County Conservation's Nature Center
Willow Creek Park 5945 Hwy 9 Ocheyedan, IA

April 9, 5:30pm-9pm
Jefferson County Conservation's Nature Center and Jefferson County Park, Libertyville Rd., Fairfield, IA

April 11, 5:30pm-9pm
Cerro Gordo County Conservation's Nature Center and Lime Creek Area, 3501 Lime Creek Rd., Mason City, IA

Go to www.iowadnr.gov/volunteerwildlifemonitoring.aspx for info on how to register for these workshops

Falcon River Trip

May 3-4, Harper's Ferry, IA
Fish Fry: Community Center, May 3 @ 6pm
Boat Trips May 4 9am-4pm
Call Pat Schlarbaum @ (515) 432-2823, ext. 104

A Publication of the:



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